

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, DC 20554**

In the Matter of)	
)	WT Docket No. 01-309
Section 68.4(a) of the Commission's Rules)	
Governing Hearing Aid-Compatible Telephones)	RM 8658

**Reply Comments of Self Help for Hard of Hearing People (SHHH)
To Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Regarding the Proposed Elimination
of The Exemption of Public Mobile Service Phones from the Hearing
Aid Compatibility Act of 1988**

Introduction

Self Help for Hard of Hearing People (SHHH) submits these reply comments in response to the Comments of the Cellular Telecommunications & Internet Association (CTIA) and the Hearing Industries Association (HIA) submitted in response to the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for WT Docket Number 01-309, In the Matter of Section 68.4(a) of the Commission's Rules Governing Hearing Aid-Compatible Telephones, FCC 01-320, released November 14, 2001. SHHH has previously filed comments in this proceeding.

Discussion

SHHH strongly requests that the Commission remove the existing exemption and require that all digital mobile telephones be compatible with

hearing aids. SHHH agrees with the comments of CTIA and HIA that the problem of interference between digital mobile telephones and hearing aids is complex. SHHH further recognizes that both radio frequency (RF) interference and magnetic interference are part of the problem of making digital mobile telephones usable by hearing aid wearers. SHHH does not agree that this problem is insurmountable, nor that it is outside the scope of the FCC's rulemaking authority. SHHH says that the FCC should remove the exemption for digital mobile telephones, and require that existing digital mobile telephones be required to be compatible with hearing aids which have noise immunity to reduce the RF (radio frequency) interference.

In its comments, CTIA includes a partial discussion of the Australian approach to resolving the digital mobile telephone and hearing aid interference problem. We can learn from the Australian experience and research results. In Australia the resolution of the problem of digital mobile telephone compatibility and hearing aid interference has been allocated to both the telephone and hearing aid industries. The hearing aid industry in Australia is working to redesign their hearing aids to meet Australian RF noise immunity standards. The digital mobile telephone industry is working to design their handsets to be compatible with the hearing aids that meet the Australian standards. The digital mobile designs address the

electromagnetic interference side of the problem. Many hearing aid manufacturers have already made significant progress in this effort to meet existing standards in Europe and Australia. SHHH believes that digital mobile telephones should be made to work with these hearing aids. Since only part of the interference problem can be solved in the hearing aid, the rest must be addressed in the digital mobile phone. Thus, in the United States, the Commission should require mobile telephone manufacturers to make their handsets compatible with hearing aids with noise immunity.

CTIA acknowledged in its comments that consumer organizations (such as SHHH) have objected to the use of accessories. However, the rationale for our objection goes beyond being distinguished as a hard of hearing person. The popularity of hands-free devices does not change the disparity in receiving an incoming call. A hearing person who uses a cell phone can choose to use these accessories for a planned outgoing call, but does not need to wear these accessories in anticipation of a potential incoming call. CTIA comments that “[f]or those consumers who find accessories too difficult to use or inconvenient, they may prefer another approach such as a hearing aid with a higher immunity level.” [CTIA comments at 18]. Until the HAC exemption is lifted, a consumer with a

hearing aid with good noise immunity is still unable to use the digital mobile phone.

SHHH continues to oppose the ANSI C63.19 Standard as a potential solution for this issue. This standard complicates the process of purchasing a digital mobile phone without increasing the usability of digital mobile technology for people with hearing aids that already have good noise immunity.

SHHH supports a ruling whereby digital mobile services are required to be accessible to hearing aid users compatible with the same level of service that hearing customers enjoy. Such a ruling would benefit people with hearing loss, serve the public good, and reflect the use of existing compatible technology. Because there currently exist several [models of digital mobile telephones which are either compatible or have very limited interference with hearing aids](#), it is clear that it is technologically feasible to [make and sell digital mobile telephones which are compatible with hearing aids, in this marketplace](#). Customers with hearing loss must be able to use the full range of existing and potential features (i.e. text messaging, voicemail, caller ID, etc.) without interference to a hearing aid, with the use of a telecoil. Requiring that all digital mobile technology be compatible with hearing aids would not make manufacturers uncompetitive, as current

sales show. If necessary, full compatibility of multiple products could be phased in over a two-year period to [minimize any potential disruption in the marketplace.](#)

Conclusion

For all of the foregoing reasons, SHHH urges the Commission to revoke the exemption currently in place for digital mobile telephones and require that they must be compatible with hearing aids. Such an action would benefit people with hearing loss, serve the public good by increasing access to telecommunications for all Americans, be technologically feasible, and be competitive in the marketplace. [Persons with hearing loss want access and a variety of choices, just like everyone else.](#)

If the interests of people with hearing loss are to be safeguarded, and access to telecommunications is to be preserved, the Commission must revoke the exemption for digital mobile telephones and technology, and require that they **MUST** be compatible with hearing aids.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Beth Wilson".

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